

STEWARDSHIP PLAN
Nisqually River – Wilcox Reach North Shoreline: Wilcox Farms LLC/Healy Partnership
RCO 16-1450; DOE WRSRP-2019-NiLaTr-00010

INTRODUCTION

Background

This plan addresses the long-term stewardship of the parcels acquired during this project – Pierce County parcels 0316184500, 316184501, 316184502, and 0316191000. Acquisition of this parcel increases Land Trust protection along the Wilcox Reach of the Nisqually River by 171.85 acres, including 1 mile of Nisqually River shoreline. This property was acquired with a combination of funding from The Washington Department of Ecology Streamflow Restoration Program and the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Programs.

Project Location

This property is located in Pierce County, southeast of the City of Yelm near the Nisqually River several river miles upstream of the Centralia City Light diversion dam (Fig. 1 – Vicinity Map). The property is adjacent to the east edge of the Pierce County side of the Land Trust’s Lackamas Flats Protected Area. It is across the river from the Land Trust’s Tatrimima, Arp, Camp, and JP Morgan Chase parcels, which are also part of the Lackamas Flats Protected Area. The Land Trust’s Powell Creek Protected Area is just upstream.

The legal description for these parcels is as follows:

Parcel A:

The southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 18, Township 16 North, Range 3 East, W.M. in Pierce County, Washington.

Parcel B:

The east half of the southeast quarter of that portion of Section 18, Township 16 North, Range 3 East, W.M., lying within Pierce County, Washington.

Parcel C:

That portion of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 18, Township 16 North, Range 3 East, W.M., lying within Pierce County, Washington and lying north of the boundary established by boundary agreement and quit claim deed recorded under Recording No. 2220092.

Parcel D:

That portion of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter and of the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 16 North, Range 3 East, W.M., in Pierce County, Washington lying north of the north line of the ordinary high water line of the Nisqually River.

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Land Use History

This property has been used for lumber production since at least the 1870s, when the property's lower haul road first appears on maps. Though the haul road is now very overgrown and at times almost indistinguishable, it is still very visible on Lidar imagery (Fig. 4 – Lidar Map). The lower bench on the south side of the property was last logged around the 1950s or 1960s, while the hill in the northeast part of the property was logged in the 1920s or 1930s and again in the 1990s.

Purpose – Nisqually Land Trust Goals

The Land Trust's mission is to acquire and manage critical lands to permanently benefit the water, wildlife, and people of the Nisqually River Watershed. Where the Land Trust owns property along the Nisqually mainstem and tributaries that are accessible to anadromous species, management focuses on maintaining and restoring naturally functioning in-stream, riparian, and floodplain habitats.

The Land Trust's primary goal for management of the Lackamas Flats Protected Area is to protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, with a focus on anadromous fish habitat. The Land Trust anticipates engaging community members in environmental education and habitat restoration activities at this site.

Relationship to Other Actions or Plans

Protection and restoration of instream and riparian habitats along the mainstem Nisqually River has been a priority since the beginning of watershed planning in the Nisqually watershed in the 1980s. Protecting and restoring riparian habitats along the mainstem Nisqually River is a priority in the Nisqually Chinook Recovery Plan and in the Nisqually River Steelhead Recovery Plan.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Funding

Land Trust staff and/or volunteers will visit this property at least once a year to monitor the condition of the conservation values, including riparian and forest habitats.

Land Trust staff will coordinate initial stewardship activities for the property as funding is available. Funding for basic stewardship tasks, including yearly monitoring and control of regulated noxious weeds, will come from the Land Trust's annual budget. As funding allows, staff and volunteers will implement other habitat maintenance and restoration activities appropriate for this site.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Physical – Soils and Hydrology

The Nisqually River makes up the south boundary of this property. The property is located on a stretch of the Nisqually where the river channel shifts frequently, especially during winter floods. The shoreline has been accreting on the west side of the property and eroding on the

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east side, and you can see evidence of many old channels in the landscape (Fig. 5 – Channel Migration Map).

The hill in the northeast corner is mapped as Kapowsin gravelly ashy loam, with 30-65% slopes on the hillsides (29.1 acres) and 0-6% slopes at the top where the hill plateaus (21.4 acres). The base of the hill, essentially down to the location of the lower haul road, is Everett stony sandy loam with 0-6% slopes (19.1 acres). The floodplain below the haul road is mostly Pilchuck fine sand (69.6 acres), with a band of riverwash along the river (23.6 acres).

Because of channel migration, portions of the soil surveys no longer align with the actual location of the river. In the survey, there is some Pilchuck loamy sand (1.9 acres) mapped in what was once Thurston County at the southwest corner of the property, but this area has been altered by erosion and deposition since the soils were mapped.

Habitat Zones

Habitat zones are mapped in Figure 6. The upland portions of the property were last logged in the 1990s. On the hill top around the northeast corner, the forest is predominantly immature, medium-stocked Douglas-fir and black cottonwood. Other species include Western red cedar, Western hemlock, Oregon ash, red alder, big leaf maple, vine maple, sword fern, oceanspray, Nootka rose, and salal in the southern part of this area. The density of the forest here is variable, with some open flat sections and some sections with thick underbrush.

The hill slopes primarily consist of poorly stocked scattered Douglas-fir, red alder, and bigleaf maple. Other species include a few white pine, grand fir, Pacific madrone, vine maple, osoberry, sword fern, and trailing blackberry. As on the hill top, the forest density is extremely variable; there are both patches of deciduous forest with a fairly thick understory and patches of immature "dog-whisker" Douglas fir with sparse or no understory.

At the base of the hill and around the haul road are poorly stocked scattered Douglas-fir and black cottonwood. Other species include vine maple, big leaf maple, red alder, Oregon grape, snowberry, Hooker's fairybell, osoberry, and sword fern. In addition to forested patches, this area includes open brushy clearings with a well-established layer of Oregon grape, snowberry, and other native shrubs.

The lowland forest was last logged as least 50 years ago and consists primarily of mature bigleaf maple and black cottonwood. Other species include red alder, western red cedar, Oregon ash, Douglas fir, snowberry, cascara, osoberry, hazel, vine maple, salmonberry, willow, sword fern, reed canary grass. In general, the areas up the slope from the old river channels have the healthiest forest, with a well-established shrub layer and overstory. In the channel migration zone, there is often a dense stand of willow just on the edge of the gravel bar, but other than that, the understory is somewhat lacking. Much of the channel migration zone is typified by approximately 30- to 40-year-old cottonwoods with reed canary grass and Scotch broom in the understory.

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Fish and Wildlife

All salmonid species present in the watershed utilize the portions of the mainstem Nisqually River where spawning habitat exists, including Chinook and steelhead salmon, which are both listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

No formal wildlife surveys have been conducted on these parcels, but citizen-science based Nature Mapping has occurred on neighboring parcels. It is likely that similar species observed in those surveys occur on these parcels as well. The property is known to be home to a large herd of elk.

Cultural and Historic Resources

There are no known cultural resources on the property.

Access Points, Boundaries and Road Easements

Stewardship access is via an easement through Wilcox Farms from 36th Avenue South, through the Wilcox Farm biowash station, to the parking lot for the most southerly of the Wilcox chicken coops (house 19). From the parking lot, there is a dirt track running easterly along the fence line that can be walked due east to reach the upland portion of the Healy property or departed from and walked due south to pick up the haul road that runs southeasterly to the Nisqually River near the property's southeast corner. Walk-in access is also possible through Land Trust property at the south terminus of 36th Avenue South, where it meets the property at the southwest corner of Wilcox Farms.

The property's boundary with Wilcox Farms is fenced except along the parking lot for the most southerly of the Wilcox chicken coops. There is no fence along the boundary between the Healy Property and the Land Trust property. The Nisqually River is the property's southern boundary.

Public Access

Recreational use of the property will be limited to pedestrian access for non-consumptive, passive recreation activities. The property may be used for citizen science and environmental education in collaboration with local and regional agencies, community groups, and universities. Because there is no legal public access to the property, public access will effectively be limited to Nisqually Land Trust groups and neighboring landowners.

Habitat Restoration

Site cleanup and habitat enhancement and restoration activities that have been identified for this property include:

- Control of non-native, invasive species (Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry); and
- Reforestation of open areas and forest enhancement to increase forest structure and species diversity.

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MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIMELINE

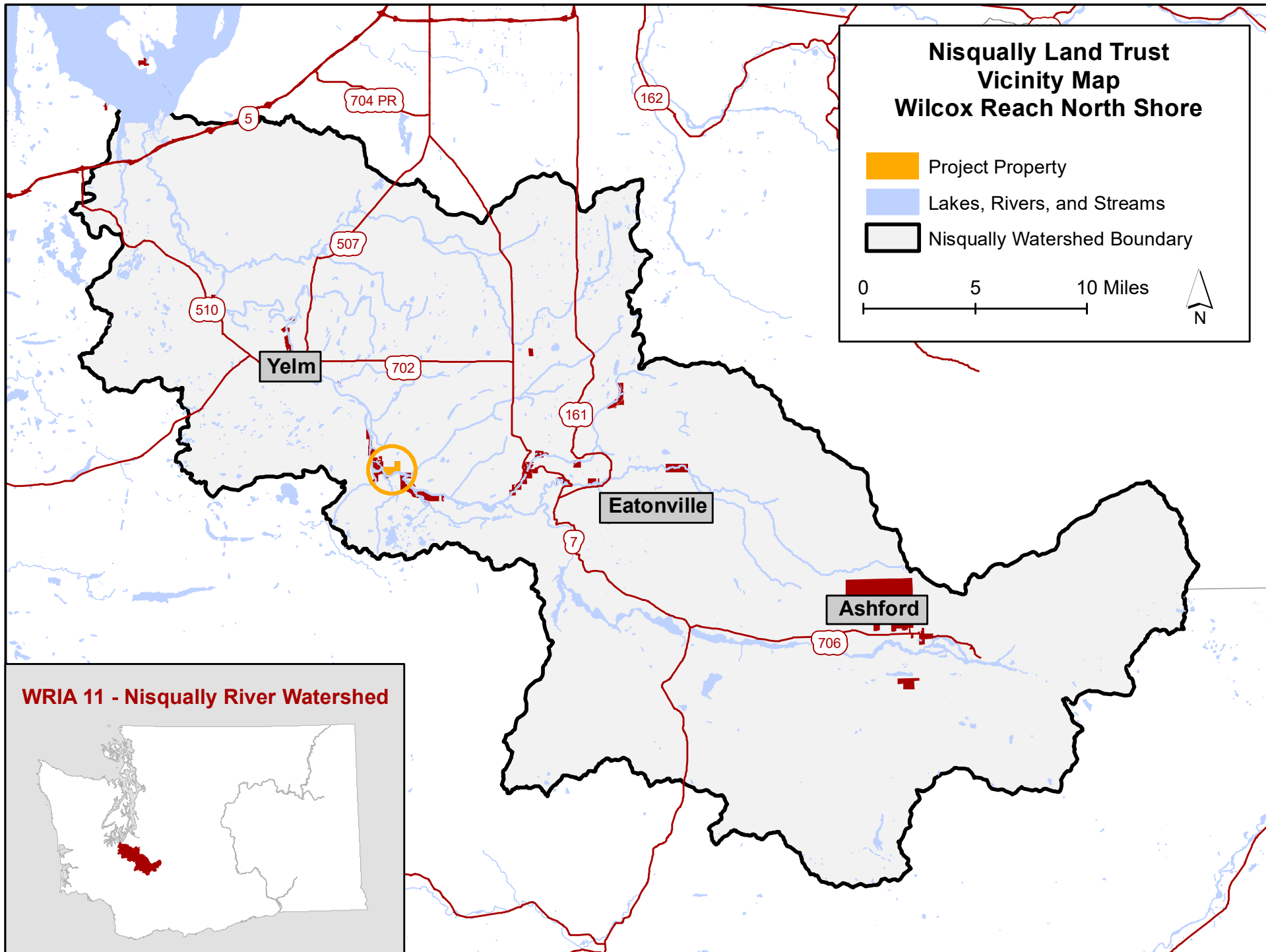
Management Activities	Timeline
Install property boundary signs	Complete
Coordinate cultural resources survey	TBD
At least one site visit each year to monitor habitat conditions and access points	Annually
Monitor for regulated noxious weed infestations; control regulated noxious weeds anywhere they are found in the project area	Annually
Control Scotch broom and other invasive species	TBD; dependent on funding
Reforestation: coordination with restoration project partners, site prep, planting, plant maintenance	TBD; dependent on funding

FIGURES

1. Vicinity Map
2. 2019 Aerial Map
3. Topographic Map
4. Lidar Map
5. Channel Migration Map
6. Habitat Zones Map



ENCUMBRANCES

- Boundary agreement – Recorded December 21, 1967, recording number 2220092.
- Parcels cannot be sold separately.
- Ingress, egress, and utilities easement – Recorded August 28, 2020, recording number 202008280400.
- Memorandum of agreement between Nisqually Land Trust and Wilcox Farms, Inc.: right of first opportunity and right of first refusal granted to Wilcox Farms, Inc. – Recorded August 28, 2020, recording number 202008280401.
- Tax designation – Forest Land. Recorded February 28, 1977, recording number 2719991.
- WA State Deed of Right to Use Property for Salmon Recovery Purposes – Recorded September 28, 2020, recording number 202009281866.



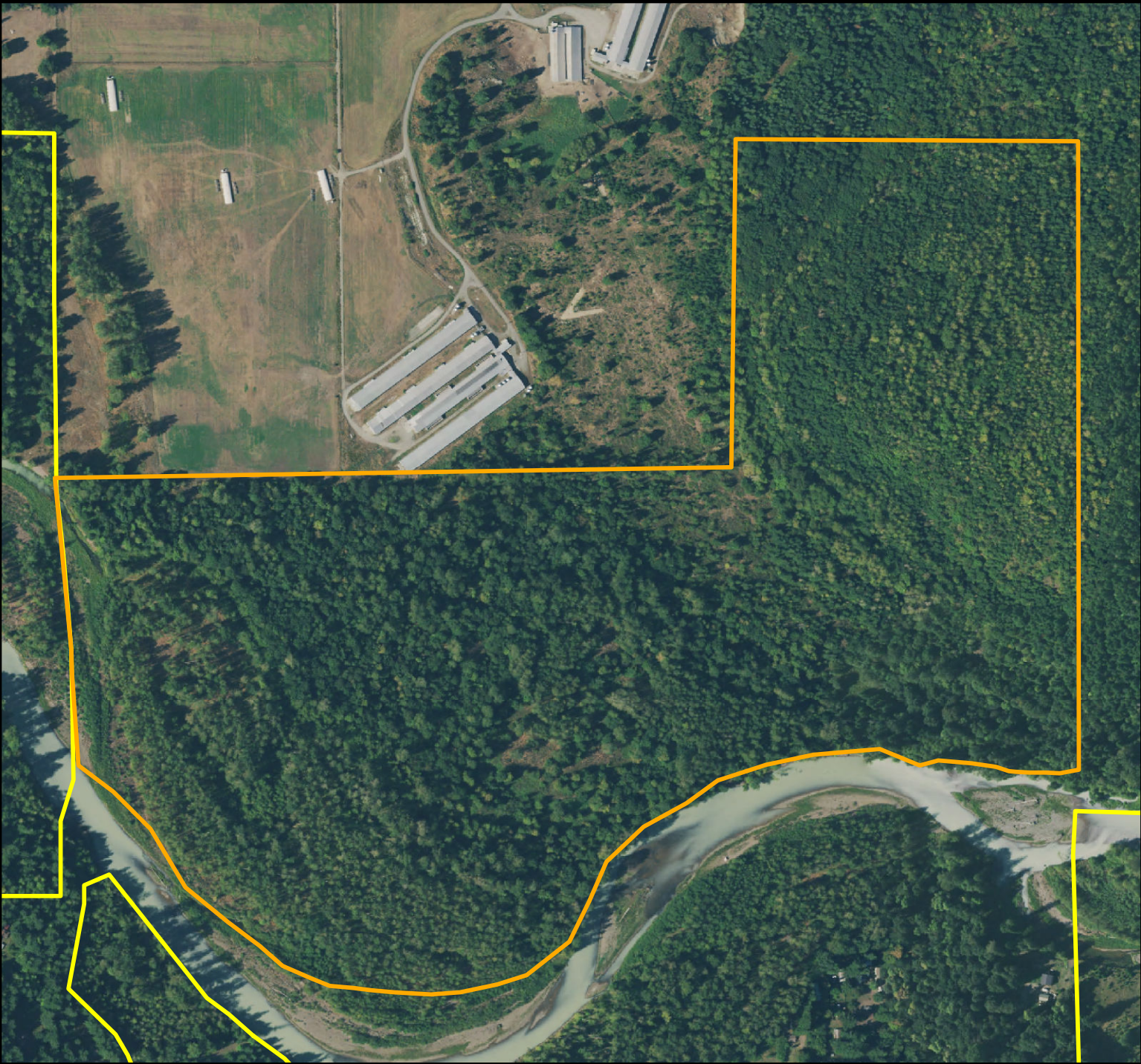
Nisqually River
Wilcox Reach North Shore

2019 NAIP Aerial Photo

-  Project Property
-  NLT Property Boundary



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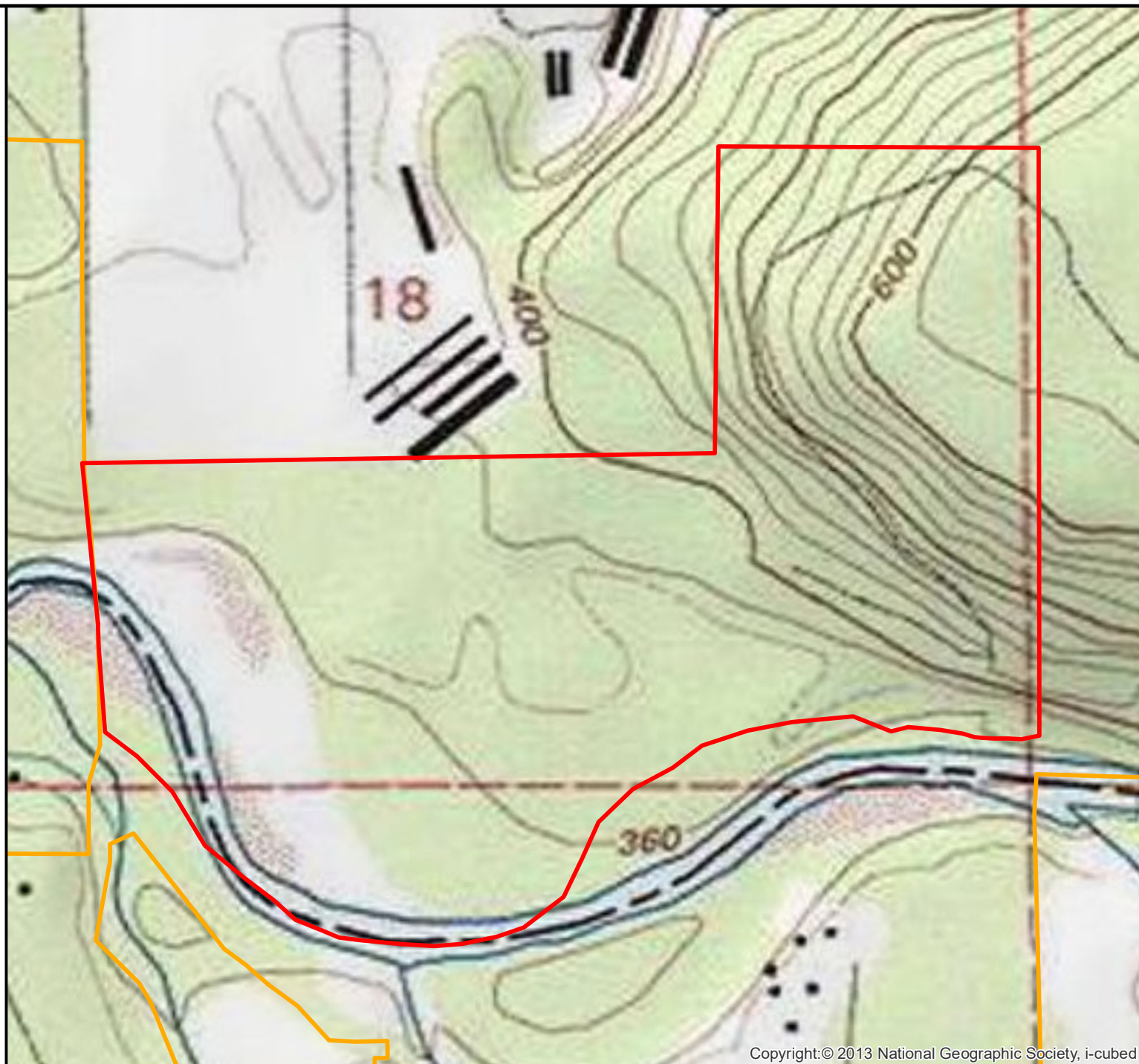
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This map is for information purposes only. The locations of all data and features are approximate and Nisqually Land Trust makes no representation as to their accuracy or completeness.

Nisqually River Wilcox Reach North Shore

Topographic Map

-  Project Property
-  NLT Property Boundary



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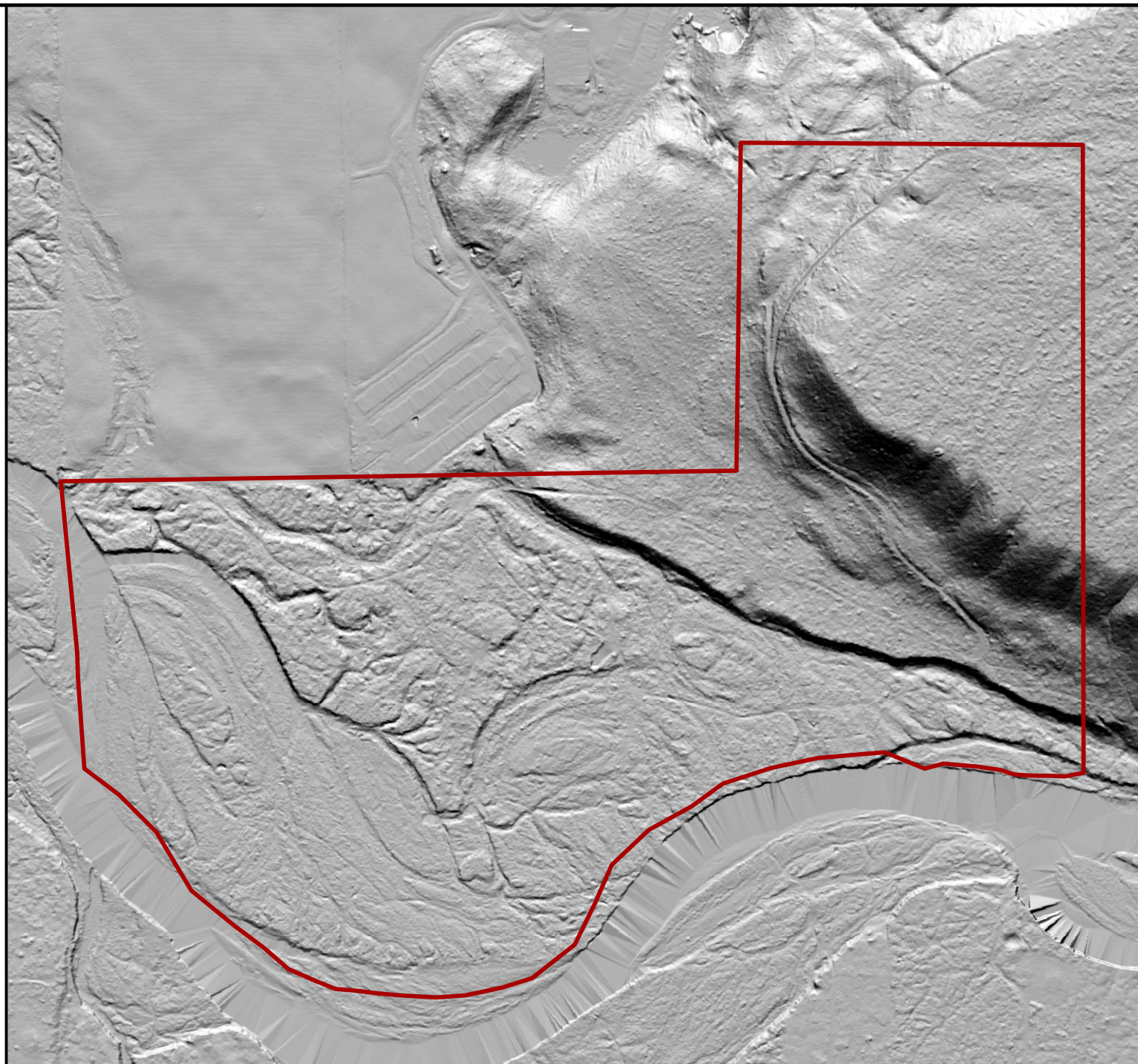
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Nisqually River Wilcox Reach North Shore

2011 Lidar Imagery

 Project Property



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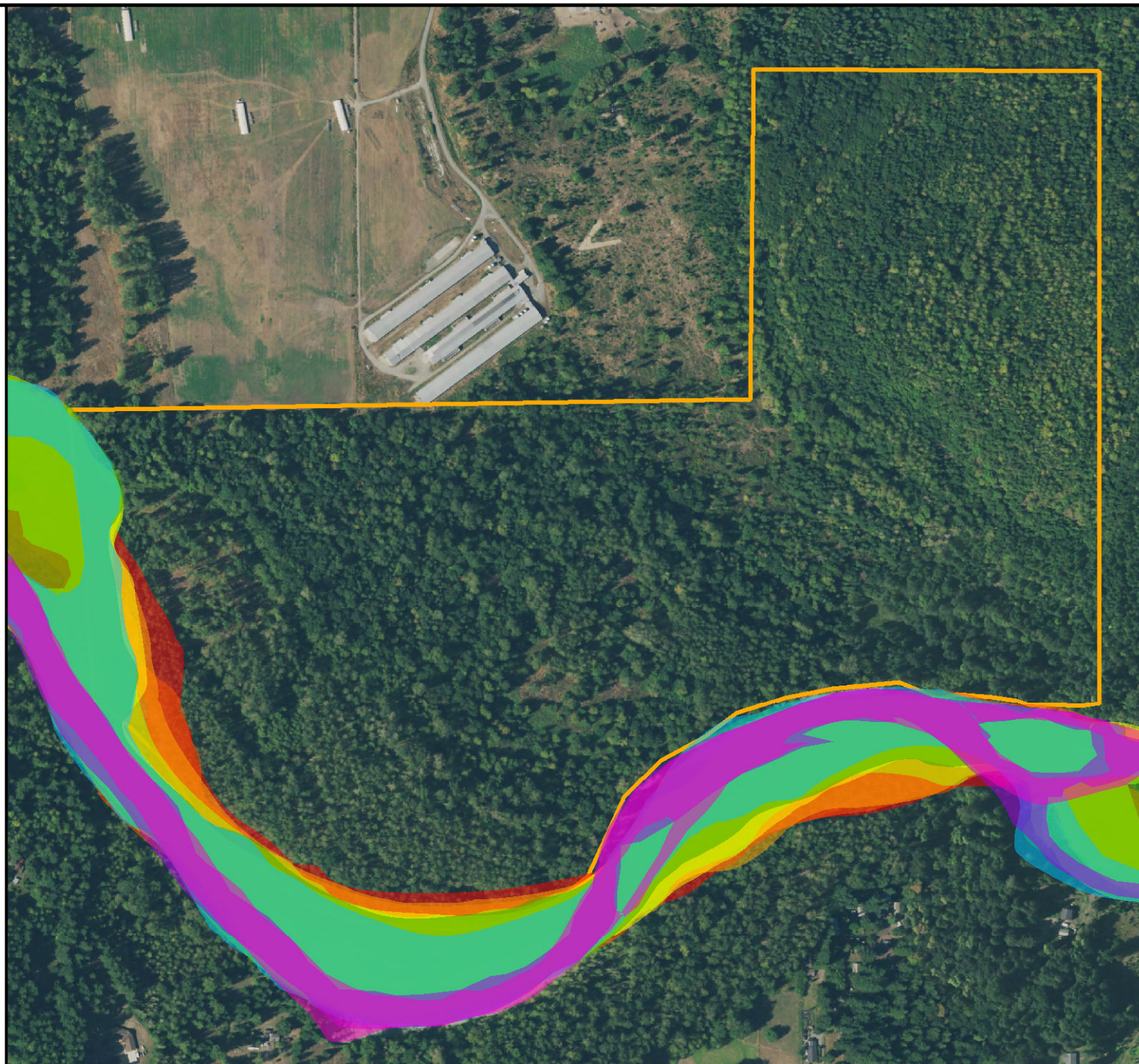
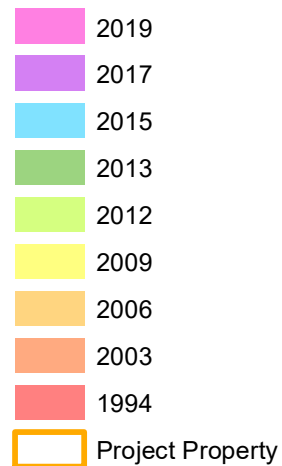
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Nisqually River Wilcox Reach North Shore Channel Migration

2019 NAIP Aerial Photo



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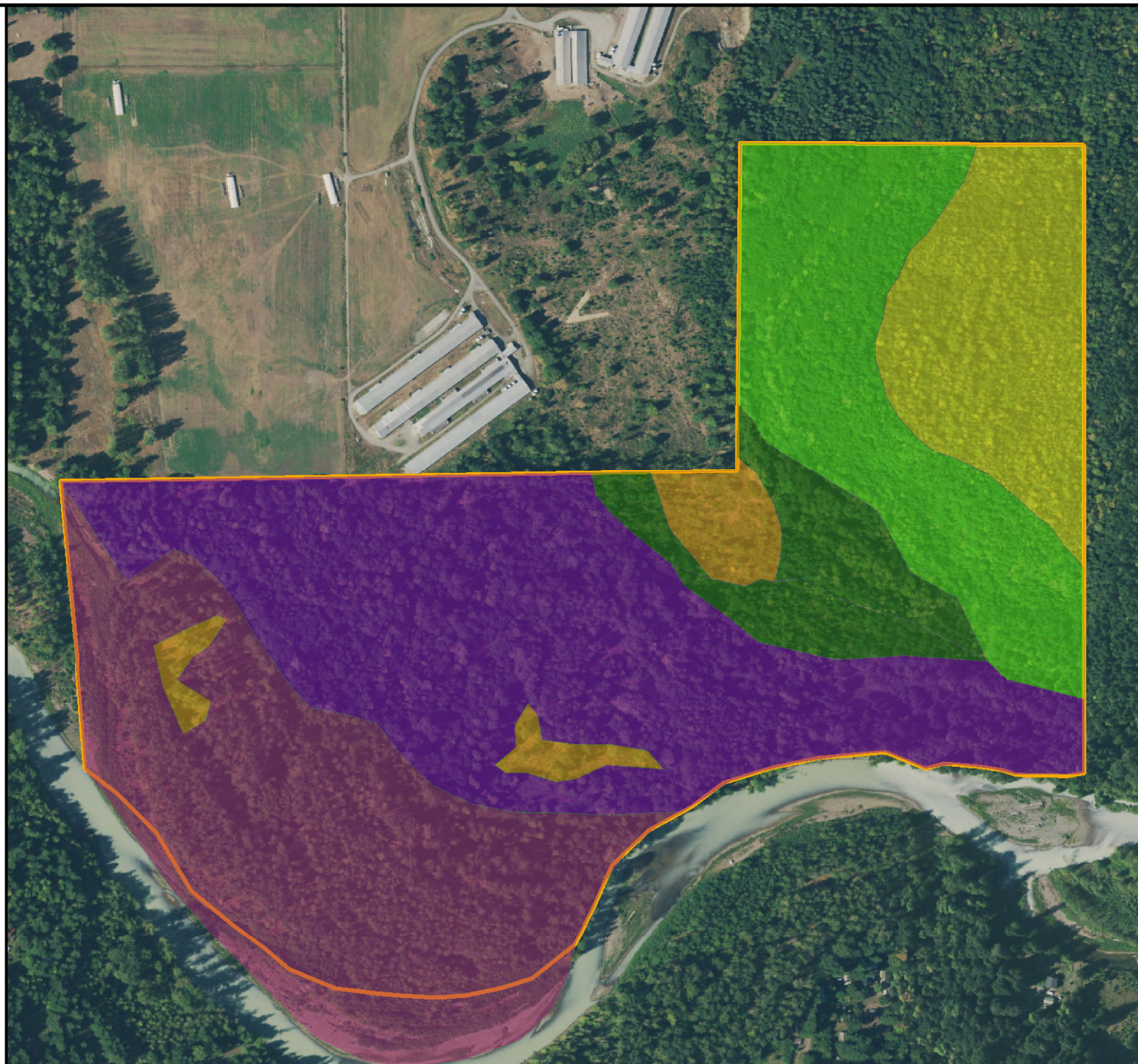
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Nisqually River Wilcox Reach North Shore

2019 NAIP Aerial Photo

Habitat Zones

- Immature floodplain forest in CMZ
- Mature floodplain forest
- Medium-stocked immature upland forest
- Poorly-stocked upland forest - Douglas fir, maple, alder
- Poorly-stocked upland forest - Douglas fir, cottonwood
- Brushy opening
- Project Property



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